

Message

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on behalf of EPAResearchCompass [/O=EXCHANGELABS/OU=EXCHANGE ADMINISTRATIVE GROUP (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/CN=RECIPIENTS/CN=C1E8F11508674C3C954553A1129D33E5-EPARESEARCH]
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To: ORD-ALL Feds and NonFeds and RSLs [/o=ExchangeLabs/ou=Exchange Administrative Group (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/cn=Recipients/cn=2c735272eef941588aefd9a05ed28823-ORD-ALL Feds and NonFeds and RSLs]
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Subject: EPA Research Compass: December 19, 2013



Bi-weekly Update for 12/19/2013

The Research Compass is your gateway to information about recent and upcoming ORD activities. If you have ideas for the Research Compass, please send them to EPA Research Compass. To see each full article on ORD@work, please click on the text that is hyperlinked.

This is your last Research Compass for 2013! Thanks for reading and we'll be in your inbox in the new year!

Quick updates

- Read the latest on the blog: [My Confidence in Future Young Scientists](#)
- Check out the newest Scientist@Work profile: [Paul Lemieux](#)
- Improve your plain language skills in the new year! Read this NYT's article on how to write about science: [The Science and Art of Science Writing](#)
- [2013 Ethics Training](#) must be done (except for contractors or SEE personnel) by **December 31**. Bookmark the [EPA Ethics Guide](#) for easy access.
- [Tribal training](#) must be completed by all EPA employees (including contractors and SEE personnel) by **January 15, 2014**.
- [Public voting for the 2013 Presidential SAVE award](#) is open until Friday **December 20** at 12:00 pm EST
- On December 18, [Lek sent out an all hands memo about plans for early outs/buy outs](#)
- Donations are being accepted by CFC in [DC](#) and [local campaigns around the US](#).
- Last but not least, upcoming webinars:
 - [OSIM Data Management webinar](#), Thursday January 9th from 2:30 pm to 3:30 pm EST

News

EPA Releases iCSS Dashboard and Data on 1,800 Chemicals

On December 17, EPA announced the release of chemical screening data on 1,800 chemicals accessible through the new interactive Chemical Safety for Sustainability or iCSS Dashboard. The iCSS Dashboard provides access to data from innovative screening technologies for chemicals that are found in industrial and consumer products, food additives and drugs. As part of this data release, EPA is announcing the ToxCast Data Challenges, a series of challenges inviting the science and technology community to work with the data and provide solutions for how the new chemical screening data can be used to predict potential health effects. Challenge winners will receive awards for their innovative research ideas. The data were gathered through advanced techniques, including robotics and high-throughput screening, as part of the Toxicity Testing in the 21st Century (Tox21) federal collaboration program.

EPA Holds First IRIS Bi-monthly Public Meeting

On December 12-13, EPA held its first IRIS bi-monthly public meeting. The meeting provided an opportunity for the public to provide input and discuss preliminary materials that were prepared prior to the development of the draft assessment for the following IRIS chemicals: ethyl tert-butyl ether (ETBE), tert-butyl alcohol (tert-butanol), and hexahydro-1,3,5-trinitro-1,3,5-triazine (RDX). The meeting also gave the public an opportunity to provide input to the peer review panel prior to external peer review for ethylene oxide (EtO) and benzo[a]pyrene (BaP). The meeting was part of enhancements to the IRIS process that EPA announced in July. The meeting was well received.

NRMRL Scientist Featured in Cincinnati Enquirer for "Green" Home Design

Chris Nietch, a NRMRL scientist and his wife, Kim, were featured in the Cincinnati Enquirer this past week, highlighting their "green" house, which includes solar panels, stormwater retention and green building materials. Among Chris' green engineering projects:

- A 3-kilowatt solar panel system that helped cut their summer energy bills by a third despite the addition of 1,000 square feet of living space that includes a lower-level studio where Kim runs her Ashtanga yoga business, Yogasana.
- A solar-thermal-powered radiant floor heating system downstairs that, along with minisplit, zonal heat pump units, helps keep Yogasana Studios at a steady 75 degrees year-round.

RTP's Environmental Management System Recognized as "Environmental Steward"

The Secretary of the North Carolina Department of Environmental and Natural Resources (NCDENR) recognized EPA's RTP site as an "Environmental Steward" as part of its Environmental Stewardship Initiative. Environmental Steward is the highest level of achievement for organizations that already display a commitment to exemplary environmental performance beyond what is required by law. Environmental Stewards must demonstrate aggressive environmental performance goals, a commitment to meet and go beyond compliance, and a process for communicating with the local community among other goals. The EPA RTP campus will receive a visit from the NCDENR Secretary for the presentation of the "Steward" plaque for EPA in 2014.

2013 Annual Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey Results

The Office of Personnel Management published the results of its annual federal [Employee Viewpoint Survey](#). The survey provides a snapshot of employees' perceptions about their jobs, work units, and how effectively each agency manages its workforce. This year, EPA responses reflected a downward trend for a number of key questions compared to previous years. Despite this change, EPA continued to perform well in comparison with government-wide averages, especially in terms of work/life programs and providing meaningful work related to the agency's mission. Results also indicated employees responded positively to questions about the quality of the work they do and about their supervisors. [Click here to see a breakout of EPA's results](#). If you have questions about the survey results, please contact [John Taylor](#), director, Human Capital Management Division, Office of Human Resources.

Hydraulic Fracturing Study Technical Roundtable Meeting

On December 9, 2013, EPA reconvened the [Hydraulic Fracturing Study's](#) Technical Roundtable. Subject matter experts discussed the outcomes of the 2013 Technical Workshops, stakeholder engagement, and plans for the draft assessment report expected to be released in December 2014. The roundtable meetings are part of the Agency's efforts to strengthen stakeholder outreach for the study. The roundtable meeting materials are available [here](#). In January, EPA will host a public webinar to share what was discussed. Details about webinar registration to follow.

SAB Holds Peer Review Meeting on EPA Draft Connectivity Report

EPA's Science Advisory Board [held a meeting](#) to conduct a peer review of the EPA draft report, [Connectivity of Streams and Wetlands to Downstream Waters: A Review and Synthesis of the Scientific Evidence](#) that was released in September. The draft report synthesizes the peer-reviewed scientific literature on biological, chemical, and hydrologic connectivity of waters and the effects that small streams, wetlands, and open waters have on larger downstream waters such as rivers, lakes, estuaries, and oceans. [The panel](#) at the SAB meeting featured experts from universities and organizations across the United States. To see what topics were discussed at the meeting, you can [view the agenda](#).

EPA Climate Report Cites 20 Watersheds Study

NCEA's recently released 20 Watersheds report was mentioned in an [Inside EPA](#) article about the effects of climate change on water pollution. EPA's report, [Watershed Modeling to Assess the Sensitivity of Streamflow, Nutrient, and Sediment Loads to Potential Climate Change and Urban Development in 20 U.S. Watersheds](#), modeled the effects of climate on streamflow, sediment and nutrients in 20 watersheds across the country. The study showed a high degree of regional variability, though it suggested potential streamflow decreases in the Rockies and interior southwest, and increases in the east and southeast coasts. The article used the report to emphasize the importance of continued study of the potential effects of climate change on water quality.

Building Water Quality Lab Capacity in West Africa

Access to clean water and adequate sanitation is fundamental for human health and well-being. The rates of access to safe water and sanitation in West Africa are among the lowest in the world due to a variety of

factors. To help address these challenges, EPA and USAID are working with various organizations in West Africa to strengthen capacity to manage drinking water quality.

As part of this effort, ORD's Fred Hauchman and OITA's Cristina Mercurio recently visited West Africa to help explore partnership opportunities with governmental and non-governmental organizations. Fred gave a presentation at the [High Level Forum for Water and Sanitation in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire](#) on building laboratory capacity in the region. Technical cooperation and financial resource mobilization were the major themes of the Forum, which was attended by ministers from countries throughout Sub-Saharan Africa, water specialists from the public and private sector, international donors, and representatives from non-governmental organizations. Future activities will focus on strengthening environmental governance, promoting public participation, and improving water quality sampling and testing through laboratory capacity building.

NRC Meeting About EPA Laboratory Enterprise Evaluation

On December 16-17, the National Research Council held a meeting at EPA's Research Triangle Park main campus regarding their work on strengthening the efficiency and effectiveness of EPA's laboratory enterprise. The agenda is available on NRC's website and a meeting summary will be posted there as well. To learn more and to see [EPA's presentations](#) at this meeting, please go to the [Lab Enterprise Evaluation intranet site](#).

Congressional Corner: Tom Burke's Confirmation Hearing

On December 17th, Dr. Thomas Burke's confirmation hearing was held with the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee. Committee members will submit their questions for the record (QFRs) for Dr. Burke before the nomination goes to the full Senate for a vote. If you missed the hearing yesterday, [the archived version is online](#).



Tech Tip: How to Switch from Black and White to Color Printing

Beginning Monday, December 16th, all "Network Printers" were set to black and white printing based on the new policy referenced in the November 5th memo from Acting Chief Information Officer Renee Wynn. Employees may switch to color printing if there is a business need. Instructions on how to change your settings from black and white to color are below.

Open the Print dialog box (typically by going to File > Print or holding CTRL + P on your keyboard.)

1. Make sure that you select a color printer from the Printer Name drop-down list.
2. Click on the Properties button next to the printer name to open the Document Properties dialog box.
3. In the Document Properties dialog box, click on the "Color" tab. Note: If there is no "Color" tab available, it is most likely not a color printer that you have selected.
4. Under "Color Options", uncheck the "Print in Grayscale" box.
5. Click on the OK button on the Document Properties dialog box to save your change.
6. When finished printing in color, simply follow steps 1-6 on the next document you wish to print in black and white except you will check the "Print in Grayscale" box in step 5

Ethical Tip of the Hat or Wag of the Finger: Gift Guide Part 2

In part two of our ethical gift guide, we discuss what gifts you can accept from coworkers. The general rules for gifts from co-workers are:

- Don't give a gift to your supervisor or a coworker who makes more money than you.
- Don't give a gift to a subordinate.
- Don't ask for donations to buy a gift for a superior.
- Don't accept a gift from a coworker who makes less money than you.

What are the exceptions to these rules?

- You have a personal relationship with a coworker that justifies the gift and you don't have a subordinate-official superior relationship (see below for special occasion).
- The gift (e.g., box of chocolates, bouquet of flowers) is given to thank to a co-worker for his or her hospitality.
- The gift is worth \$10 or less.
- The gift is leave that was transferred under an approved agency leave sharing plan. (excluding your immediate supervisor)
- You are sharing food and drinks with many people in the office.
- The gift is for a special occasion (e.g., marriage, illness, the birth or doption of a child, retirement, resignation or transfer). On such occasions, an employee may give a suitable and appropriate gift and may request voluntary donations of small amounts within the office to use toward the gift.

What Should You Do When You May Not Accept a Gift?

- Decline acceptance or pay market value
- If perishable, ask an ethics official or your supervisor.
 - The perishable items may be given to charity, shared within the office, or destroyed.

For more ethics information, check out the [Ethics Guide for EPA Employees](#).

Faces of ORD: NHEERL's Alex Almario (click here to see more photos of Alex at work!)

Each issue of the EPA Research Compass features one of ORD's outstanding employees. If you would like to nominate someone to be featured, please contact [Maggie Sauerhage](#) or [Megan Maguire](#).



Name: Alejandro "Alex" Estrella Almario

Job/Position: Biological Science Technician and Field Operations

L/C/O or Program: NHEERL, Gulf Ecology Division, Ecosystem Assessment Branch

1. When did you start at EPA?

I started in January 2005, just as the Pensacola area was recovering from Hurricane Ivan and after 10 years with the National Park Service. I spent 2 years at Glen Canyon National Recreation Area including Lake Powell and the Colorado river in Utah and Arizona performing fisheries and water quality work and 8 years at Assateague Island National Seashore in Berlin, MD home to the famous wild ponies of Chincoteague, conducting estuarine water quality monitoring and mentoring student interns in aquatic resources.

2. What's the most interesting thing about your job?

I enjoy conducting cutting edge ecological research in remote and challenging ecosystems along the Gulf coast, as well as partnering and collaborating with some of the best and brightest minds from multiple state and federal agencies, contractors, and academia.

3. What's the most interesting thing in your workspace?

REMUS (Remote Environmental Monitoring UnitS) and AUVs (Automated Underwater Vehicles). A few years ago NHEERL's Gulf Ecology Division was working with our sister lab the Atlantic Ecology Division in Narragansett, RI and the Naval Research Laboratory from Stennis Space Center near Ocean Springs, MS using AUVs off the coast for oceanographic research. Although I didn't work on this project, it was pretty cool to see these "robotic yellow scientific torpedoes" in action.

4. What's your favorite thing to do (besides come to work)?

In the past year I've become obsessed with riding motorcycles and ATVs. Almost everyday I commute 60 miles round trip by motorcycle on just one gallon of gas and on the weekends I explore muddy ATV trails in the Florida panhandle, Alabama, and Mississippi. I also enjoy the outdoors with my wife Barbara, a Wildlife Biologist with the state of Florida and our 2 dogs, Jessie, a 30 lb dachshund/beagle mix from a shelter in MD and our 8 lb micro-mini-long-haired red dachshund Zoe, rescued from GA after she was found dragging her hind legs.

5. What's your favorite lunch spot?

Being fortunate enough to work on Pensacola Beach, I have a lot of choices. sometimes I visit the National Park Service's Gulf Islands National Seashore, our federal neighbor and my former agency, and climb a dune atop an abandoned WWII bunker for spectacular views of the Gulf of Mexico and Naval Air

Station Pensacola or I just have lunch in my office where I converted my window sill into a lunch nook and watch the dolphins, pelicans and skimmers feeding in Pensacola Bay.

6. If you could have one superpower, what would it be?

My superpower would be the ability to breathe underwater. Anyone who works with fish and water quality dreams of being down there without all the gear and hardware that us air breathing humans need. I want to swim upstream with salmon and see what's at the bottom of the Marianas Trench.

7. What were you most excited for this summer?

We usually take a vacation at the end of August each summer to National Parks, but this year we're saving up for a trip to Hawaii to celebrate our 5 year wedding anniversary on Valentine's Day 2014.

8. Do you have a favorite winter memory?

Having lived in the mid-Atlantic and Northwest Florida for many years, I miss snow and I haven't experienced a real winter since becoming an adult. My favorite memory is captured in an early 70's picture of my entire Filipino family: Mom, Dad, two sisters and I, all bundled up, on a wooden toboggan sledding down a snowy hill in Connecticut.